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# Glastonbury



The Isle of Avalon



**ILLUSTRATED GUIDE**

CONTAINING

**A Concise History of the Abbey  
and other places of interest.**



A GUIDE TO

# Glastonbury

and its Abbey

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A Short History of the  
Abbey Ruins and other  
Notable Buildings; together  
with Ground Plan.

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## GLASTONBURY

GLASTONBURY, the Isle of Avalon, is famous throughout the world. Pilgrims from all corners of the earth have visited, and continue to visit this holy shrine. Here legend yields to history, and history runs up into legend, but there is little doubt that Glastonbury Abbey was the oldest religious foundation in the British Isles. The story of the Wattle Church is linked with the history and legend of Glastonbury. When in 1125, the Benedictine historian, William of Malmesbury, came to Glastonbury Abbey, to write the history of this venerable place, at the invitation of the monks, he said of the Wattle Chapel; "The Old Church of Our Lady of Glastonbury . . . did none other man's hands make, but actual disciples of Christ built it." He then goes on to say, "The Church of which we speak is commonly called by the Saxons 'the old church,' on account of its antiquity. It was at first formed of wattles, and from the beginning breathed and was redolent of a mysterious Divine sanctity, which spread throughout the country. The actual building was insignificant, but it was so holy."

William adds, "And so the church of Glastonbury is the most ancient, of all those I know, in England; hence its name. The mortal remains of many saints, are preserved there." Therefore it can be said that here the earliest British Christian Church remained in the hands of the Britons, while other parts were invaded and conquered by the Saxons; here Christ was still acknowledged, and when Glastonbury, in its turn was conquered and became English the Saxons had already joined the Christian Standard, so that there was no break in the one true worship.

The town nestles prettily at the foot of a series of hills—Tor, Chalice, Edmund's, Weary-all, etc.—the Tor (525 feet), with its peculiar conical shape, and its tower on the summit, being the centre of the group and the most conspicuous, it being observable for many miles in every direction. Stretching

from these hills to the Bristol Channel is a vast tract of lowlands and turf moor, which possesses much interest of its own, with its apparently inexhaustible supply of fuel, and the botanic growth peculiar to it. From the position of the town it may easily be realised that in early days this lowland was a marsh covered by waters from the Channel, and that these hills formed the centre of an island. This island was, moreover, the principal of many, for several are still spoken of historically as islands—Meare, Wedmore, Athelney and Beckery. In British times we find its name was Ynyswitrin—the Glassy Island; and later when it became cultivated and found to be fruitful—it is said that apples grew spontaneously—it was called the Isle of Avalon, from Avalla—an apple. As to its more recent or English name Glastonbury, an effort has been made to prove that it and the British Ynyswitrin had a similar meaning, both having the element GLAS in them. It may have originated from a tribe, or family, of the Glaestings who, finding the place, from its fruitfulness, likely to serve their purpose, settled round the “Old Church,” it thus becoming Glaestingas—burh.

Many signs of the olden times still exist. The “Old Wells Road,” or the “Old Wells Way,” from Bove Town to the Railway Bridge on Wells Road, is Roman, if not British: in all probability the latter, as the British rather sought the high places in which to make their roads, while the Romans made them straight from point to point with more laborious art. The Old Road from Glastonbury to Northover on the eastern side of Weary-all Hill is undoubtedly Roman or British. The continuation of this road through the fields, crossing the river Brue, in a more direct line towards Street Church, has been traced and laid open. It appears to have been made between piles of oak driven into soft earth, and then tied together by others laid across like the “corduroy roads.” On the road to Street is a bridge which still retains its ancient name of Pomparles, or Pons Perilous or Pons Perilis.

Glastonbury is a municipal borough, its charter of incorporation—dated from A.D. 1705, when it was granted by Queen Anne—provided for a Mayor, Recorder, Town Clerk, eight Aldermen, and sixteen Councillors. The charter was obtained by Peter King, who became the first Recorder, only resigning that office on receiving the appointment of Recorder of London,



when he was knighted. The immediate ancestors of Peter King were inhabitants and natives of the town, and he was in his turn the ancestor of Lord King, the Earl of Lovelace, who married Ada, the daughter of Lord Byron. The Corporation as above constituted only came to an end in the year 1836 in consequence of the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act, when all such boroughs were reconstituted.

After the dissolution of the Abbey a party of Flemish weavers were invited over, and one of the Abbey outbuildings was used as the centre of their operations and dwellings. This was in the year 1551. At first there were about 34 families, which soon after increased to 46 families; but difficulties arose and the experiment did not show much result, nor did they leave much behind them to mark their former presence.

In several directions at a few miles distance are parks with manor houses, formerly belonging to the Abbey, and serving as rural retreats for the Abbots. Such is Norwood Park, an interesting old house, built by Abbot Selwood, whose monogram, surmounted by a mitre, is on a panel between the projecting windows.

Sharpham Park also claims notice, not only as possessing a house worthy of inspection, but because it was the one at which Abbot Whiting, the last Glastonbury Abbot, was arrested at the Dissolution; and also as being the birthplace of Henry Fielding, the father of the modern novelist, and a room is pointed out as having been used as his library. The manor house is of uncertain date, but was granted to one of the Abbots. Formerly the approach was under a noble avenue of trees.

The manor house at Meare also belonged to the Abbey.

### **ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.**

The history of Glastonbury indeed embraces the history of its ecclesiastical buildings which was founded at the earliest date, and became one of the most flourishing monastic buildings in England. It was a great centre of learning, and was sought by pilgrims from all parts of the world. In tracing its history it is necessary to go back to a time prior to the Abbey's foundation, even to the rise of Christianity itself, for Glastonbury boasts

of being the first spot in which the Name of Christ was taught, and there is clear evidence that He was worshipped here, without cessation, from the first promulgation of the true faith to the present date.

There is a tradition that in or about the year A.D. 60 St. Philip sent Joseph of Arimathea over to Britain to preach the Gospel; and he, with twelve companions, came by way of Wales from the south of France, and the British Chief, Arviragus, noticing that they had journeyed far, and were of a modest demeanour, allowed them to settle in the Isle of Ynyswitrin, and eventually gave them each a hide of land, which was the origin of the Twelve Hides of Glastonbury. Thus, having gained a footing, Joseph built a church of wattles, and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary, and in this church they worshipped and taught the people the true Christian faith.

Tennyson says:—

“ From our old books I know  
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,  
And there the heathen prince Arviragus  
Gave him an isle of marsh, whereon to build;  
And there be built with wattles from the marsh  
A little lonely church, in days of yore.”

Arviragus was the cousin of Caractacus, and fought many battles against the Romans as head of the British forces succeeding his cousin. Juvenal alludes to him, writing: “Hath our great enemy, Arviragus, the car-borne British King, dropped from his battle throne?”

Joseph is said to have brought with him the Cup of the Last Supper, which was buried by him in what is known as Chalice Hill. He and his disciples rested on Weary-all Hill and he there planted his staff, which forthwith sprouted and blossomed. Thus they laboured, and as the original twelve disappeared other twelve took their places.

Many historians say that St. Patrick visited Glastonbury more than once in the fifth century, probably after he had been sent by Pope Celestine, as a missionary, to Ireland. William of Malmesbury says of St. Patrick, “From Cornwall he came to Glastonbury and there he became monk and abbot, and after some years, paid the debt of nature . . . His body was placed in a stone monument to the right of the altar in the old church . . .”



St. Benignus, and St. Bridget of Kildare are also said to have lived and died at Glastonbury.

A former Dean of Wells, the Very Rev. R. H. Malden, writes that: "St. David, who died probably about the year 600, is said to have made some addition to the east of it, what was even then known as the Old Church ('*vetusta ecclesia*' in Latin)."

The first absolute certain fact in the history of Glastonbury Abbey, is that in the year 633 St. Paulinus, who was Bishop of York, and then Rochester, cased the Old Church with wood and lead, to preserve it.

There is evidence of a charter being granted to the Abbey, A.D. 601, by the Damonian King, Gwrgan; at about this date Glastonbury was made the great sanctuary of the British in place of Ambresbury, which had fallen.

King Ina granted a charter to the "Old Church" A.D. 708; and Canute another A.D. 1032; and these are both dated as having been signed in the "*Lignea Basilica*." This early church is also mentioned as the "*Vetusta Ecclesia*," and the "*Ealde-chirche*." Ina also built another church, larger and more imposing, which he dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. This was at a short distance to the east of the former building, and on the same site as the one erected at a still later date, the ruins of which still exist. Ina bestowed many gifts upon the church.

### KING ARTHUR

by Dr. C. A. Raleigh Radford, F.B.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.

Glastonbury has for many centuries been identified as the Island of Avalon, the place where King Arthur was buried. There he was carried after the fatal battle of Camlann in order that he might recover from his wounds. Tennyson describes the scene as Arthur takes leave of Sir Bedivere:—

"But now farewell. I am going a long way  
With these thou seest—if indeed I go  
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)  
To the island-valley of Avilion;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever winds blow loudly; but it lies  
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns  
And bowery hollows, crown'd with summer sea,  
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

Described in these terms Avalon is no earthly place but the Celtic Paradise barely disguised. Arthur, who has become a folk hero, fittingly dwells in this Paradise. But the connection between Arthur and Avalon may well rest on a real connection between the historical Arthur and Glastonbury.

Arthur is generally accepted as an historical character, a British general of the sub-Roman age, who carried on the functions and traditions of the late Roman army commanders, defending the civilized lowland province of Britain against all raiders, whether they were Germans from across the sea or wild tribesmen from the western hills. The Old Welsh Annals and other early sources record a number of battles in which he fought and place his death in the year 516. The oldest tradition locates his seat, Camelot, at North Cadbury in the great pre-historic hill-fort some twelve miles from Glastonbury. If Arthur was really a local man the Ancient Cemetery at Glastonbury is likely to have been his burial place.

This, at least, was the belief of the Monks of Glastonbury. Geoffrey of Monmouth's book on the Kings of Britain was a 12th century best seller and interest in Arthur became widespread. In 1191 bodies identified as those of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were exhumed from the cemetery on the south side of the Lady Chapel and translated into the Great Church of the Abbey. Eventually they were placed in a shrine in the centre of the quire a few feet east of the crossing, where the fragmentary remains of the structure were found in 1934; the spot is still marked in the turf.

The graves from which the bodies were transferred are described as laying on the south side of the Lady Chapel, between two "pyramids" or crosses. These represent shrines or graves, thought to be the burial places of saints and marked by lofty standing crosses. Excavations in 1962 and 1963 brought to light a socket from which a lofty stone pillar, probably a cross, had been wrenched; the filling contained fragments of 16th century pottery suggesting that the monument had been destroyed at the Reformation. The cross originally stood about 40 feet south of the Lady Chapel, opposite the second window from the east end. Fifteen feet further south was the wrecked remains of a small



Glastonbury Abbey, looking West





semi-underground tomb chamber or Hypogeum, the type of tomb shrine to which the term "pyramid" should strictly apply. Between the cross and the tomb chamber a large hole had been opened late in the 12th century and refilled after a very short interval. The hole went down into natural soil destroying two or three of the earliest graves, including one set close against the tomb chamber and therefore belonging to a man of power and standing. There in the position described by the medieval writers, two bodies had been exhumed in the late 12th century, and there can be no doubt that these were the bodies which the monks identified as Arthur and Guinevere.

The identification is based very largely on a lead cross found in the coffin. It bore an inscription in Latin, which may be translated;—"Here lies buried the famous King Arthur in the Island of Avalon." The cross is lost, but the 16th century engraving suggests that it dates from before the Norman Conquest. It could well date from the 10th century, when St. Dunstan is said to have raised the level of the cemetery. The clay terrace, which he formed has been found; it would have buried any early memorial. The lead cross is most easily explained as a label replacing the original stone stele which one would expect marking the grave of a 6th century general, such as Arthur.

### **A GREAT NATIVE: ST. DUNSTAN.**

Dunstan, the next worthy who came upon the scene in connection with the Abbey, was a great patron to the establishment. He was born at or near Glastonbury, probably at Baltonsborough, where the church is dedicated to him. He was educated in the Monastery, and became a favourite at the court of King Edmund, and after a variety of exciting incidents was installed as Abbot of Glastonbury about A.D. 936. Being a pupil of the Benedictines he brought this Monastery thoroughly into accordance with their rules, and it became a model for other monastic establishments. He built the larger church in stone, and other portions upon an extended scale. King Edmund, A.D. 944, at his instigation granted a charter, in which was confirmed all its possessions and privileges, and by which it was released from many heavy burdens.



## ROYAL BENEFACTORS AND EXPLOITERS.

Dunstan influenced several successive Kings to befriend and enrich the Monastery; and Edmund, Edgar, and at a later date Edmund Ironsides, were buried within the precincts of the Abbey Church.

Canute visited the Abbey A.D. 1030, and granted the charter before spoken of. He visited the tomb of his great rival, Edmund Ironsides, and there prayed, and placed upon the tomb "of his murdered brother" a splendid robe, in which the gorgeous plumage of the peacock was reproduced by the skilful needles of English embroideresses.

William of Normandy deprived the Abbey of many of its lands to enrich his followers, and appointed Turstine, a monk of Caen, as the first Norman Abbot. This man appears to have been an independent-minded ecclesiastic, and at first to have stood up for what seemed to be the rights of the monks; but shortly after he desired to bring foreign rules and usages into the establishment. Against the wish of the priests, he determined to suppress the Gregorian Chant, and introduce one used in Normandy in its place. At this the monks rebelled, and, they refusing to submit, he called to his aid some Norman soldiers, who followed the monks into the church, and even shot at them in that sacred edifice, killing some and wounding others. Investigation being made he was reprimanded and dismissed; but it is stated he obtained, at the death of William, permission to return as Abbot by paying a sum of £500.

## THE GREAT FIRE,—LAST OF THE EALDE CHIRCHE.

In A.D. 1184 a great fire occurred, which consumed the greater part of the building, including the Wattle Church. Adam of Domerham gives the following succinct account of it:—"In the following summer, that is to say on St. Urban's Day (May 25th, 1184), the whole of the Monastery, except a chamber with a chapel constructed by Abbot Robert (1178-9) into which the monks afterwards betook themselves, and the Bell Tower, built by Bishop Henry, was consumed by fire." No reason is given, nor are there any particulars to be gathered from the old writers who treat of these times and circumstances. Only Adam of Domerham very feelingly remarks:—"The beautiful buildings, lately erected by Henry of Blois, and the Church,

a place so venerated by all, and the shelter of so many saints, are reduced to a heap of ashes! What groans, what tears, what pains arose as they (the monks) saw what had happened and pondered over the loss they had suffered. The confusion into which their relics were thrown, the loss of treasure, not only in gold and silver, but in stuffs and silks, in books and the rest of the ornaments of the church, must even provoke to tears, and justly so, those who far away do but hear of these things."

In 1184, the time of the fire, the Abbey was in the hands of Henry II, and he, after enforcing the condition that all the revenue of the Abbey, except that portion necessary for the maintenance of the monks, should be used for the rebuilding made himself responsible for its re-erection; and now the work proceeded rapidly, and St. Joseph's Chapel, then known as St. Mary's, was finished by June 11th, 1186; but unfortunately Henry died in 1189, and his successor, Richard Coeur de Lion, was of course entirely taken up with his great crusade; and disputes with Wells occurred, which resulted in part of the revenue being diverted, so that although the monks tried to get money by various means, they were not successful, and the building for some years progressed but slowly or stood still altogether, and it was more than one hundred years before the work was completed.

In 1275 an earthquake did much damage, and among other effects was the destruction of the body of the church on the Tor. By some it is thought this building was never restored; but the probability is that it was, and was near its completion, if not quite completed in 1290.

In 1331 Edward III and Philippa paid a visit to the Monastery, and were entertained by Adam de Sodbury, the then abbot, at an immense expense.

About 1510 Erasmus, the great friend of Abbot Beere, came to visit the Abbot and the Monastery, and Beere submitted to him a work he was writing for criticism.

In 1524 the last Abbot, Richard Whiting, was appointed. He was named by Wolsey, the monks having requested he should choose an Abbot for them, and to their surprise and joy he fixed upon Whiting, who held but a subordinate position in the Abbey. At the time of the general dissolution of the Abbeys, commissioners were sent down to inspect this establishment,

and they reported well of the discipline and conduct of the monks; but an excuse was required for its suppression, and this was too easily found. A book opposed to Henry's divorce was found in the library, and the oath of supremacy was offered to the Abbot, which he refused to take. He was taken into custody at Sharpham Park, and conveyed to London and lodged in the Tower as Wolsey wished to question him himself. Eventually he was brought back to Wells, where a nominal trial was held, and he was sentenced to be hanged, and two of the monks with him. The account says that he was brought from Wells to Glastonbury and the sentence was carried out upon Tor Hill overlooking his Abbey.

Such is a concise history of the Abbey, the ruins of which form so attractive a feature to the Town.

### **THE RUINS (Ground Plan, page 38.)**

give but a poor idea of the magnificence of the Abbey as it formerly existed, magnificent though they are. Originally it consisted of two churches, viz., St. Mary's and SS. Peter and Paul, with Cloisters, Chapter House, Library, Scriptorium and School; while the domestic arrangements were upon a very extensive scale. Independent of the buildings used for the Abbey as an ecclesiastical establishment the Abbot had his private dwelling, with hall, and guest house, and stone kitchen. Of all these but little now remains, the four walls of St. Mary's, better known as St. Joseph's Chapel, and some ruins of the large church, St. Peter and St. Paul—and the Kitchen—all the rest have been swept away by time, or more ruthlessly by the sordid hand of man, and for the sake of a few shillings the stones have been sold for building or for unworthy purposes. As the visitor enters the grounds of the Ruins from Magdalene Street the first object that meets his gaze is

### **ST. MARY'S OR ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL.**

This was the site upon which the first church—the wooden church made of wattles—was erected. It is referred to in many documents as the “*Lignea Basilica*,” the “*Vetusta Ecclesia*” and the “*Ealdechirche*”. This was the spot upon which the gospel was first proclaimed in our island. The old Chronicle





St. Mary's Chapel, Glastonbury Abbey.





says; "The new Church of St. Mary's was built in the place where from the beginning the old had stood." The present building was erected after the fire in 1184, and was distinct from the larger church. The walls are supposed to have been built outside those of the earlier building, so as to enclose it, and the older building was not removed until the walls of the latter were completed. But although this church was distinct, it was used as the Lady Chapel to the larger one, and from the time of Abbot Michael, 1253, we no longer hear of St. Mary's Church, but the "Capella of St. Mary." It is most unusual for the Lady Chapel to be situated at the west of the principal building, or to be separated from it, but there are instances of such an arrangement, and this was eventually united to the larger church by a Galilee, of which we shall speak later. The reason for it being used as the Lady Chapel may be the sacredness of the ground upon which it was planted, or perhaps difficulties arose in building on ground to the westward of it.

It is not surprising that with all the associations connected with the old church that it should be deemed more than ordinarily sacred, and that it should become the repository of many saintly relics. William of Malmesbury says: "Here are preserved the human remains of many saints, nor is there any space in the building that is free of their ashes. So much so that the stone pavement, and indeed the sides of the altar and the altar itself, above and below, is crammed with the multitude of the relics. Rightly, therefore, it is called the heavenly sanctuary on earth, of so large a number of saints it is the repository."

This Chapel is a gem of art, which attracts the attention of hundreds of visitors. Three of the walls are standing, and on the north and south are four windows, mullioned and rising loftily, nearly to the vaulting, with semi-circular heads, between which windows are remnants of richly-decorated panellings. The ornamentation consists of running patterns of foliage and tendrils, while the sun and stars, etc., were painted, the colours of which are observable even to the present day. The style bears witness to the date of its erection. Being built between 1184 and 1186, when it was completed, it partook of the Norman and Old English characters, and it is evidently of the transition period. It had a turret at each corner, two of which are still standing. The flooring was composed of encaustic tiles.

The north door is a splendid sample of Norman work and much of it, as well as the carving of the inner portion of the Chapel and other parts of the Ruins, is as fresh as if produced by the workman's chisel at a late date. The carving of this door is very elaborate, and consists of four arches, in each of which the figures are still apparent, and it may well be supposed a connected design obtained for the whole; and perhaps the interpretation given by Mr. Hope in a paper read before the Somerset Archaeological Society at Wells in 1888 is the best extant. He treats the four arches as No. 1, the inner, and No. 3 as resting each on the jamb shafts, while Nos. 2 and 4 are continuous bands springing from the ground round the arch, and reaching the ground again. The figures on the bands are: No. 1 beginning from the left:—

- 1 and 2.—A woman kneeling, and an angel, representing the annunciation.
- 3.—Two women embracing, representing the salutation.
- 4.—Represents the Nativity, being a house with a bed in the centre, and a sitting figure, Joseph at the head, the Virgin and Child in bed, and figures broken away, probably the ox and the ass, on the right.
- 5.—It is difficult to decipher, but appears to be a man with his back to an angel with outstretched wings, and his face also turned in the same direction. On the right of the angel is a small bare-footed figure, and beyond a large figure.
- 6, 7 and 8.—Standing figures, all crowned, evidently the three kings asking of—
- 9.—A sitting king, Herod, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

Bands Nos. 2 and 4 are filled with figures of the usual things pertaining to agriculture, and the life of the time and neighbourhood.

Band No. 3 consists of eighteen loops:—

- 1, 2, 3 and 4.—Are a king standing, another figure also standing, and a man kneeling on one knee, to our Lady and Child sitting; and represents the three kings who found the King of the Jews, and are offering Him gifts.
- 5, 6 and 7.—Each contain a mounted figure riding away, viz., the three kings going home.
- 8, 9 and 10.—Each contain a bed with a man asleep, while on No. 8, an angel issues from the clouds, the ancient method of depicting a vision, and they represent the three kings warned in a vision to return to their own country by another way.

- 11, 12, 13 and 14.—An armed figure holding a shield, and a club or mace; a king sitting; a knight in ring mail, striking at some object on his left or in his hand; and another knight in chain mail with an infant impaled on his sword; evidently representing the massacre of the Innocents.
- 15.—Two women weeping. "In Rāma was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping."
- 16.—A man in bed with the hand of God issuing from a cloud, viz., Joseph warned of the death of Herod.
- 17.—An animal (broken) and
- 18.—A man carrying luggage, clearly the return from Egypt.

It was evidently intended that the south door should be as elaborately carved as the north, but only some few loops are completed.

### THE CRYPT.

There appears little doubt that this Chapel was built at the date already given, and that at that time it had no crypt. This evidently was dug out at a later date, probably in the 15th century, the windows and doorway being of that date. This must have been a hazardous undertaking, unless the foundations of the building went down to such a depth, viz., twelve feet. Up to this time there were two doors at the east end of the church, leading by way of the Galilee into the larger church. These are now blocked up to make room for the windows, which by their style, may be the work of Abbot Beere, 1493, who we know expended considerable sums in building. As the larger church became finished the bones of many saints were removed to the new ground, and therefore there would not have been so much objection in disturbing the earth as there would have been in the time of which William of Malmesbury wrote; and as many gifts flowed into the church they required a crypt in which to store them. At the east end of it is still standing, though in a very dilapidated state, a remnant of the ceiling, and of the floor paved with tiles, by which an idea may be formed of its original condition.

### THE WELL

is in the crypt, or rather was built outside the foundation. It is approached either by a short passage from the crypt or by a staircase from outside the chapel. The mouth of the well is beneath an arch, the carving of which repays investigation, and



shows how scrupulously the monks performed their work, even in positions where it could scarcely be seen by the public. While whole buildings have been lost sight of, it is not to be wondered that the recess in which this well was placed should be filled with stones and rubbish fallen in the general desolation; and it was only in 1825 it was traced and reopened to the light of day. Whether it was supplied with water from a spring of its own, or from one to be mentioned later, known as the Holy Well or the Blood Spring, is undetermined. An electric light has been fitted for the use of visitors.

St. Joseph's Chapel was originally a detached building, and the larger church was built to the east; but after a time a flight of steps was placed at the east end of the chapel leading from the Galilee, which was on a lower level, and which formed a junction between it and the larger building. St. Joseph's was then treated as the Lady Chapel to that dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul.

At the east end of St. Joseph's Chapel the visitor will find himself within the precincts of the larger church or

### **THE CHURCH OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.**

The visitor will be able to form a fair idea of the size of this building by the fact of the graceful and lofty arch now partly standing towards the east—which was one of four supporting the bell tower—being beneath the roof which spanned from the southern wall, still existing, to one on the northern side corresponding to it, the roof being supported by columns; and the choir extended still further beyond, at the eastern end of which was placed the High Altar. This building was 400 feet long and 80 feet broad. It has already been stated that Henry II held the Abbey at the time of the great fire in 1184, and made himself responsible for its re-erection; and to show the spirit in which he entered upon the work the following quotation may be made from a charter he granted about this date. He says: "But chiefly that the town of Glastonbury, in which the 'vetusta ecclesia' of the mother of God is situated, which is truly reckoned to be the source and origin of all religion in England, should be free above all others, together with its Islands, etc." Adam of Domerhan says:—

"He"—Fitz Stephen, who was acting under Henry—"repaired

all the offices, and afterwards laying the foundations of a most beautiful church, carried them to the length of 400 feet to the width of 80 feet. Pressing on rapidly with the work he spared no expense. What he could not obtain from the revenue of Glastonbury that the royal bounty supplied . . . . Building then a good part of the church, he would have completed the rest if God had prolonged the King's life. But alas! covetous and too ready death snatched him away, and so inflicted another wound upon the monks, who were only just recovering from their last misfortune"; and many years elapsed before the work was completed.

The design of the whole appears to have been early English but there is a certain Norman character about it, which may be accounted for from the old materials of the former building having been largely used in its reconstruction, as from the poverty of the monastery they were unable to purchase and work new stone. The transepts and choir appear to have been first rebuilt. The transepts were made to contain four chapels two in each, and of these one in the north is fairly perfect, as well as the commencement of a second; and in the south only a small portion of one nearest the choir. From what remains we may judge of the extreme gracefulness and beauty of the whole. The richness of the work will strike any visitor. Adam of Sodbury vaulted the nave and adorned it with beautiful pictures, which it is to be regretted are all lost to us. One of his monks, Peter Lightfoot, also made a large and remarkable clock, having many figures and movements, which was destroyed at the Dissolution. A similar clock made by Peter Lightfoot is in the North Transept of Wells Cathedral. Adam of Sodbury was buried in the nave, which he had completed, with his father on his right and his mother on his left hand.

It is a matter of great regret that so little is left of what must have been so magnificent a pile of buildings. It may be mentioned that originally there were two doorways from the Galilee, of which the northern alone remains, but these were converted into windows when the crypt was excavated, and windows were also inserted in the lower part to light the crypt.

The Chapel to the left of the arch of the north choir aisle is that of St. Thomas the Martyr. Several of the arches are of older character than others in the Great Church, and probably



were built of arch stones from the earlier structure. In the Church were the tombs of King Arthur and his Queen Guinevere, of the English Kings Edmund, Edgar and Edmund Ironsides, and many Abbots and others who were anxious to secure a last resting-place in so sacred an edifice.

Excavations in 1928-9 revealed portions of the foundations of the successive structures.

Eyston says in his "Little Monument" that when he was at Glastonbury in 1722 some part of the Abbots' apartments was standing, but shortly after it was taken down, and the last of the material used in building a neat new house on the South West side of the enclosure. This house, which in another place he calls "a neat little box," he says can be noticed, being set off in several parts of the front with coats of arms of the Abbey carved in large stones. This house may still be traced.

### THE EDGAR CHAPEL.

King Edgar's benefactions to the Abbey were very great and never forgotten by the monks, and the last two Abbots having, as Leland tells us, honoured him by building a chapel to enshrine his remains, we have good proof of the great veneration accorded him. Beere died in 1524, and was succeeded by Whiting, who met the sad fate of execution after a mock trial, on Tor Hill. The grim story is well known; how he displeased the King by his refusal to surrender and was condemned on a charge of robbing the Church.

It may be assumed that some part of the foundations of the Edgar Chapel were in evidence during the 18th century, though not remembered as such, neither were its locality nor dimensions known definitely until in 1908 Mr. Bligh Bond, as officer of the Somerset Archaeological Society, was enabled to bring to light the whole area of the plan. Visitors can now see this laid out in a permanent manner, and something of the grand proportions of the two Abbots' work may be gleaned from an inspection of the lines. The nearer portion of the chapel is rectangular, but a chantry or sacristy on the south side, is probably an addition by Abbot Whiting to Beere's original work. The foundations of the rectangular part are very massive, those of the side walls being

6 ft. 6 ins. thick and the ends 4 ft. 6 ins. The width enclosed is 18 ft. 6 ins., but the chapel would have been wider in the superstructure. There was apparently an ante-chapel included in the length which formerly united the work to the choir. The total length of the rectangle as now visible is about 60 feet outside measure, but from the extremity of the retro-choir it is nearly 72 feet. The addition of the polygonal apse would bring the whole to about 87 feet, but it may have been the full ninety, as the east end is not defined. Mr. Bond's theory of the apse was questioned by other authorities. Two years after the excavation an old manuscript plan was discovered in the library of Colonel William Long. This plan is now in the possession of the Somerset Society, and it gives the position of the Edgar Chapel and its length as 87 feet. The total length of the Abbey, including this extension, as a series of internal measures, is given as 581 and a half feet. To this must be added the thickness of the end walls at the two extremes, making the overall measure about 592 feet. Thus a problem which had defeated all antiquaries for upwards of half a century is at last cleared up. The buttress footings are very massive, and Mr. Bond says must have supported a heavy fan-vaulted roof of the type of Henry VIIth's Chapel at Westminster. There was another like it at Wells (Bishop Stillington's) of which some fragments are preserved. The Edgar Chapel must have been a beautiful work. It was probably one of the first to be destroyed. Traces of an early settlement were found at a great depth during the excavation: wattle-work and animal's bones, all blackened. Experts declare these similar to others unearthed at Castle Neroche, near Taunton, at Avebury, and elsewhere.

### THE LORETTO CHAPEL.

This was another instance of a site being lost and forgotten. Leland was the authority for the existence of this chapel, which he says was built by Beere "joining to the north side of the Body of the Church." In 1919-20 the foundations were discovered, and found to be in the place described, the dimensions appearing also correct. There is but little left, and the only part that can be shewn is the angle (S.W.) of rough stonework, visible within the bank on the north of the nave area.

The discovery of the Edgar and Loretto Chapels, as well as that of the north porch of the Abbey and the Chapel of St.

Dunstan at the extreme west, have restored to us the main outlines of the great plan so largely obliterated by the violence of many generations, whose sole interest in the building seems to have been its commercial value as a quarry for building-stone. The excavation also of the site of the cloisters and chapter-house, with the sub-vault of the Refectory, have given us back in part the general scheme of the monastic buildings. In 1921 the north wall of the transept was discovered, and its proportions may now be seen. Another feature of interest unearthed in 1921 was the old foundation running by the north side of St. Mary's Chapel. At a short distance to the north may be seen the site of the pyramid referred to by John of Glaston as marking the eastward limit of the Ealde Chirche. This also was found in 1921, and a part of the bank removed that it might be left permanently on view.

During the course of excavation work in another portion of the Abbey enclosure a curious interment was discovered. In the clay was found the perfect skeleton of an elderly man, of exceptional height, with his head towards the west. There was no coffin, but there was a freestone ring encircling the head, and carved to admit of the neck. No satisfactory conjecture has been forthcoming for the reason of this stone ring around the head.

Excavations are proceeding, as funds permit, during the summer months.

### **THE CLOISTERS.**

enclosed a square space to the south of the west end of the great church, having a flower garden in the centre, and here the monks on occasion took exercise. A door at the east of the Cloisters and to the south of the south transept led into

### **THE CHAPTER HOUSE.**

which was used for the transaction of the business connected with the monastery. We may imagine the important matters brought before the inmates; the election of the Abbots and other officers; offences tried, openly confessed, as openly reproved, and in many cases corporal punishment inflicted in the presence of the Abbot and the whole Convent. There stood on a platform the renowned Abbot's chair, which is now kept as a relic at Wells. In another part in the same neighbourhood was



### **THE FRATERY,**

an apartment for novices who had their own refectory, and domestic arrangements; and

### **THE LIBRARY,**

which was the first in England, consisting of choice and valuable books, the gifts of royalty and devotees of all classes. In the 12th century it was of great renown, and was greatly increased by Henry of Blois, and was considered the storehouse of all the learning of the time. As the pilgrims all wandered here for the sacred relics of ages gone by, so the scholars came to consult the tomes in the wonderful library. And attached to the Library was

### **THE SCRIPTORIUM,**

where those monks noted for their scholarship and writing ability worked in transcribing the costly books and illuminating missals, etc., an art that is imitated but scarcely equalled in the present day. Illuminating was an art practiced by a monk, other than the transcriber, the latter leaving spaces for the required colouring. Many exquisite examples, whose value is almost beyond calculation, exist in the different museums of the country, while some few may be inspected in that connected with our own town. On the south side of the Cloisters was

### **THE REFECTORY**

where the whole of the monks repaired for their meals. A table was placed at the upper end for the Abbot, the Prior, and other officers of the establishment; another for the priests, and others for the monks and those who were not yet priests, and another for the lay brethren. In a convenient part of the room was a pulpit, from which portions of the Bible were read by a brother every day during dinner and supper. All stood in their places till the sub-prior, who presided, came, a psalm was sung. A short service was performed before the meal began, and at the end another short service when the monks retired singing the Miserere. Near the Refectory was



### **THE GUEST HOUSE,**

where all visitors were received. They appear to have been able to remain for two days and two nights, and were expected to leave on the third day, although they might gain permission to remain longer by application to the Abbot.

### **THE ABBOT'S PRIVATE APARTMENTS,**

were situated to the west, and at some distance still further west was

### **THE ABBOT'S KITCHEN,**

probably built in the early part of the 14th century, and was the Kitchen belonging to the Abbot's great Guest Hall, where he entertained his visitors—not the one attached to the Monks' Refectory—it is therefore the Abbots' rather than the Abbey Kitchen, as it is often called. The whole range of buildings—the Abbots' private dwelling, the Guest Hall and others—was built by Abbot Fromond (1303–22) and was not completed till 1333–41 by John de Breynton. The kitchen is a square building with the corners cut off by the insertion of a fireplace in each and has an octagonal roof crowned by a lantern. It is a fine specimen of the 14th century style of architecture, the principle feature being the Louvre, which was common in halls as well as in kitchens of the middle ages. The lantern is double, the outer octagonal, the inner circular. In the interior the roof has eight curved ribs springing from the octagon formed by the fireplaces and ending at the inner lantern, leaving eight small air-holes round the central large one. This arrangement was necessary to carry off the smoke at the top of the building from the large fires that were continually kept up. There are but few examples of kitchens of this period left, and this one has been maintained in an excellent state of preservation. In June, 1921, this property also passed to the keeping of the Church of England.

The chimney shafts have been opened and the air-holes uncovered.

### **THE HOLY THORN.**

An excellent specimen of the Thorn can be seen in the Abbey grounds, and another in St. John's churchyard.

A tradition says that on Weary-all Hill Joseph stuck his staff into the ground, and perhaps because his disciples wanted

a sign, or because the people gathered around had but little faith in his mission, it sprouted and budded at once, and always has since blossomed on Christmas Day:—

“Where the winter thorn  
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.”

On the ascent of the hill is a stone laid on the ground with an inscription on it, which marks the supposed spot where the original Holy Thorn grew. The thorn was treasured as a sacred relic till Commonwealth Iconoclasts destroyed it. It is said the sacrilegious individual who tried to cut it down met with much opposition, and was miraculously injured by a splinter from the tree. It was, however, destroyed, and now only trees budded or grafted from the original exist. It blossoms twice—at Christmas, and again in May. Dr. Layton, who was sent by Cromwell into Somerset to inspect the monastic buildings, wrote to him, apparently referring to this tree:—“By this bringer I send you relics; first, two flowers wrapped in black sarsnet, that on Christmas Mass Even, *hora ipsa qua Christus natus fuerat*, will spring and burgen, and bare blossoms.”

Dugdale, giving a drawing of Weary-all Hill, places on the slope a tree, marking it “*Sacra Spina*”.

Bishop Goodman, of Gloucester, says: “The White Thorn of Glastonbury which did usually blossom on Christmas Day was cut down, yet I did not heare that the party was punished . . . Certainly the thorne was very extraordinary; for at my being there I did consider the place, how it was sheltered; I did consider the soile, and all other circumstances, and yet I could find no natural cause.”

### THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

This guide, which cannot be otherwise than a brief summary of details and events connected with the Abbey, would not however, be complete without some reference to its more modern history. Since the dissolution the ruins have had a chequered existence, weakened by the devastating influence of time, weather and storms, and ruthlessly pillaged by vandal owners, who uprooted and carted off whole portions of the stone work to be utilised as building material. Much that was left standing at the time of the dissolution has now disappeared, save the most meagre traces, in the shape of foundations, which have

recently been brought to light. Until quite recent years when the ruins came into possession of the late Mr. Stanley Austin, little was done to preserve them or to arrest decay. Mr. Austin, however, did much towards these highly commendable objects, and now, since the ruins have come into the hands of the Trustees, we have the further assurance that they will be well and truly cared for, and preserved as a national heritage for all time. Before touching upon that well-known event, the sale of the Abbey Ruins, a few words about former owners of the Ruins will interest readers.

Edward VI granted the Abbey buildings, lands, and orchards to Edward, Duke of Somerset, and when the Duke was attainted for treason they reverted to the Crown. In June, 1559, Queen Elizabeth granted the site to Sir Peter Carew, and on his death they were granted to Thomas, Earl of Sussex. His heir and brother, Henry, fifth Earl of Sussex, sold the site to William Stone, who in 1596 conveyed it to William, Earl of Devonshire. In 1733 it passed from the hands of the Devonshire family into those of Thomas Bladen, of Middlesex, who settled the estate upon his daughters. Subsequently it passed from their ownership, and after several changes became the property in 1806 of Mr. G. Cox, who disposed of the Abbey estates to Mr. John Down. Later on it became the property of Mr. James Austin, and was by him bequeathed to his son, Mr. Stanley Austin.

Coming to the sale of the Abbey Ruins early in 1907, it was announced through the *Guardian*, and subsequently by the local newspaper, the *Central Somerset Gazette*, and a number of other journals, that the then owner, Mr. Stanley Austin, intended to sell the Ruins by public auction. Public interest was immediately aroused in the event, and the fate of the Abbey became practically a matter of national importance. Many likely purchasers were suggested, and various schemes were propounded for its acquirement and subsequent use. One of these was that the Abbey and mansion attached should be acquired by the Church of England as a Training College. Another proposal was that of an American lady, who sought to enlist sympathy in her project to secure it for the purpose of founding a modern "School of Chivalry," based upon traditions of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. It was also at one time imagined that it might be purchased by the



nation, and a question asked in Parliament elicited the fact that the proposal had been entertained, and an official sent down to investigate and report, but the proceedings fell through. The Roman Catholic authorities also were regarded in some quarters as probable purchasers; and it was also rumoured that an American syndicate had been formed with the object of purchasing the Ruins as a show place.

On June 6th, 1907, the sale took place in a marquee erected in the grounds of the Abbey House, when, the bidding having reached £30,000, the auctioneer, the late Mr. Robert Bowring, declared the purchaser to be the late Sir Ernest Jardine, of Nottingham. The same day it was rumoured locally, and shortly afterwards it was officially announced by the Bishop of Bath and Wells (the late Dr. Kennion), that the purchase had been effected by Sir Ernest (by arrangement), with a view to the Ruins and site being acquired by the Church of England.

Almost immediately afterwards the Bishop of Bath and Wells made an urgent appeal for assistance in raising the £30,000 purchasing money. There was a ready response, the subscribers including King Edward, Queen Alexandra and the Prince of Wales. By October, 1908, the amount required, which with interest and other expenses had increased to close upon £31,000 had been raised, and the Ruins and site had become the absolute property of the Church of England.

It is significant that the closing of the fund was celebrated by a great and solemn thanksgiving service.

The property is vested in the Bath and Wells Diocesan Trust, and is governed by Trustees, the head of the controlling body being the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Much has been done in preserving and strengthening the Ruins, the work having been carried out under the superintendence of Mr. Caroe, the architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The two remaining piers of the central tower of the great church have been repaired and preserved, and the south-western turret and western buttress of St. Joseph's Chapel have been rebuilt, this work being necessary for the permanent protection of the ruins. In addition, other portions of the ruins have been repaired and strengthened, and much debris, climbing plants, etc., which assisted decay has been cleared away. Further work is projected as funds permit.



Other work was the restoration of the original entrance in Magdalene Street, and for this purpose the Red Lion Inn, which was built up from the old gateway, was acquired, and the old work remaining was used as the basis for the new gateway, which was built as close as possible to the plan of the old one. A new road running past the Royal Almshouses for Women leads into the Abbey enclosure, and the whole forms a great improvement upon the former entrance from Glastonbury High Street, besides being a return to the original style. Money for this work was raised by a Restoration Fund.

As the acquisition of the Abbey by the Church of England was a matter of such national interest, the greatest satisfaction was felt when Bishop Kennion of Bath and Wells announced that on the 22nd June, 1909, in connection with the public celebration of the millenary of the Diocese of Bath and Wells there would be a special function at Glastonbury Abbey. At this the trust deeds were handed to the Archbishop of Canterbury in keeping for the Church of England, and further, the occasion was honoured by the attendance of Royalty in the persons of the Prince and Princess of Wales (who became King George V and Queen Mary). Such an event, it was generally considered, was a fitting climax to the great efforts that had been put forth to preserve the Abbey.

Connected with the Abbey are several buildings in the town of an interesting character.

### **ST. PATRICK'S CHAPEL**

the Chapel was built by Abbot Beere, 1512, but the dedication of the former is uncertain, though it is now called St. Patrick's Chapel. There is a recess by the side of the altar, which upon the supposition of this being the original is likely to have been used for keeping the sacred vessels in. The former entrance to the Abbey was through the gardens and the archway then existing was built up into The Red Lion Inn, but the inn has been done away with, and the arch utilised for its original purpose.

### **THE (ST.) GEORGE OR PILGRIM'S INN.**

This is a conspicuous building on the northern side of the lower part of High Street. It was built about 1475 by Abbot

John Selwood. Up to this date strangers were lodged in the Abbey or at the Abbots' Inn at the Abbot's expense; but as this accommodation was found insufficient this Inn was built, where strangers could be lodged at their own expense. The windows appear to have been inserted at a later date. There is a fine hall upstairs, approached by the original staircase from below. Of the three shields over the doorway one contains a St. George's Cross, the centre one the arms of Edward IV, and the third is left blank. The first and third are believed to relate to the tradition that it was at Glastonbury the cognisance of the Cross was conferred on George.

### **ST. JOHN'S CHURCH.**

The present structure was built by Abbot Selwood, 1485, on the site of an earlier Norman Church. When restored in 1859 the bases of pillars of the old building were discovered, and the original appears to have had a central tower. The present tower was built later at the west end, and is considered one of the finest in the county, Wrington, St. Cuthbert's at Wells and St. Mary Magdalene, Taunton, ranking before it. Its height is about 140 feet to the top of the pinnacles, which were added in the last century, and they were formerly rather higher than they are now. At the east end is a fine altar tomb of John Atte Well (1472), and one of Joan Atte Well his wife (1485). In the St. George's Chapel is a tomb surmounted by an effigy in alabaster of one Camel of Campbell, a treasurer of the Abbey.

### **ST. BENEDICT'S CHURCH**

This Church should rightly be dedicated to St. Benignus or St. Bennings, as it was until the middle of the 17th century. Bishop Benignus was a great friend, disciple and successor of St. Patrick.

The first Church was consecrated about 1100. The present Church was built on the same site about 1520, by Abbot Beere (1493-1524) the learned and cultured friend of Erasmus, whose monogram, R.B., is inserted over the little window in the north porch. He built the north aisle and probably the tower. Note should be taken of the shield in the embattlements over the north

porch and on two of the corbels within the Church. They bear what is known as the arms of Joseph of Arimathea. Note also the two roof corbels in the nave, showing St. Benignus vested as a Bishop, with a tree in his hand, instead of the usual pastoral staff. With this he set forth to find St. Patrick, and where it put on foliage, there he built his cell. There was a small Chapel in the north side, called the Sharpham Chapel.

### **ST. MARGARET'S CHAPEL.**

The great hall on the first floor has disappeared. The ground floor is now divided into apartments. The great hall would have opened into the chapel, known as St. Mary's now called St. Margaret's, which is usual to many infirmaries of monasteries as a convenience to patients. The bell now removed, was the gift of Queen Anne. The whole is ruinous and neglected, but there is a scheme on foot to preserve, at least, part of it.

### **THE ABBEY BARN,**

a handsome building, is at the corner of Bere Lane in Chilkwell Street. Where the possessions of the Monastery were numerous and scattered there would be more than one, and this appears to have been the chief barn of our Abbey. As much skill has been expended in the construction of this building as in many a church. At the four corners were figures of the four Evangelists. It was erected in the time of Nicholas Frome, who was appointed in 1420. It is in a beautiful state of preservation. Inspected from the interior it will be found to be a cruciform building, with a fine timber roof, and two large doorways in the arms of the cross. There are slits for ventilation, or owl holes, but no windows except a small one of three trefoil openings under a pointed arch in each of the principal gables, and a larger upright one of two lights with decorated tracery over each door. There is a figure of an Abbot upon the peak of one of the larger gables, and a mutilated figure upon the other.

### **CHALICE WELL, Glaston Tor School, Glastonbury.**

This well, which is chalybeate in character, rises in the valley that separates Chalice from Tor Hill, in the terraced garden at Chalice Well. Chalice Hill is so named from the legend of





The Abbots Kitchen, Glastonbury Abbey.





Joseph of Arimathea, having brought over with him the Chalice Cup or Passover Dish, of the Last Supper, and having buried it in this Hill.

“The cup, the cup itself from which our Lord  
Drank at the last sad supper with His own;  
This from the blessed land of Aramat,  
After the day of darkness, when the dead  
Went wandering over Moriah—the good Saint,  
Arithmathean Joseph, journeying brought  
To Glastonbury.” *Tennyson.*

The first written record of the spring is by William of Malmesbury, who mentions the waters that are sometimes blue and sometimes red; but legends and stories of the Holy Grail have also gathered around this spot from mediaeval times.

It has been the scene of many baptisms, whilst miraculous powers have been attributed to these waters. Among others to tread the narrow path to the Well, old chroniclers tell Patrick and Bridget, Aldhelm and Dunstan.

The masonry of the Well has been the cause of much discussion and is believed to be of pre-Roman origin. Possibly it is connected with the Druids, since experts consider it to have been associated with the ancient rituals of sunlight and water. Certain it is that the massive stonework is orientated, as has been proved by measurements on Midsummer Day. Archaeologists, who have examined the stones, report that they are placed together in wedge formation as in the case of in the Pyramids, and that they are “ripple” marked by stone implements, as at Stonehenge. Sir Flinders Petrie was of the opinion that the Well might have been rock-hewn by Egyptian Colonists in about the year 200 B.C. The waters are chalybeate and radioactive having a never failing flow of 25,000 gallons per day, even during the severest drought. The well is square, measuring eight and a half feet deep from water level.

### THE TOR.

No one should visit Glastonbury without ascending the Tor. It is a conical hill, standing out very prominently, and forms a landmark for miles around. It is about 520 feet high and as already stated had formerly a church on its top dedicated

to St. Michael. He was the guardian saint, and here he not only guards the town, but also the whole of Somerset. The Church is evidently of very ancient date, as St. Patrick is said to have found it in the beginning of the 5th century in ruins, and he and his associates re-built it, and appointed certain of the brethren to keep up the services there; and much labour was bestowed in clearing the hill of the underwood that appears to have made the road up the hill almost impassable. The body of the Church is recorded to have been thrown down by an earthquake in 1275. Report says it continued in a dismantled state; but there is no doubt it was rebuilt, as just previous to the death of the Abbot John de Taunton numerous indulgences were granted to those who would assist in its restoration. The Tower alone now remains. It is a strong piece of work, and the carvings in front are curious and interesting. On one is a woman milking a cow; on another is the devil weighing the world against a human soul, and a pelican plucking its own breast. In the early part of the last century the foundations of the Church were laid bare.

The ascent of the hill from Chilkwell Street is easy, and as the visitor progresses it will be pleasant to view the prospect from the seats that are provided at different stages. When half-way up one will be easily able to imagine the island as it existed in early days. The hills would crop up above the water which covered the lowlands, extending on all sides. The vast extent of these lowlands between the Isle of Avalon and the Bristol Channel is very conspicuous. Towards Edgarly the former residence of King Edgar, which lies immediately at the foot of the hill to the right, and beyond with West Pennard Church in the distance, will be seen to be higher ground, and here it was that a communication with the neighbouring lands was maintained, the approach being guarded by a fortification at Haviatt, known as Ponter's Ball.

The prospect from the summit is almost unique, being a complete panorama. Eastward it extends to the Wiltshire Downs. To the north, Wells may be distinctly seen lying in the valley at the foot of the Mendips. The Cathedral and St. Cuthbert's Church may easily be distinguished; and beyond, stretching both east and west, are the range of Mendips. To the west a

break in the hills may be seen—Cheddar with its magnificent and lofty rocky pass; and still further west the range continues till it is lost in the Bristol Channel, its extreme points being the Steep and Flat Holms. In this direction the Channel may, on a clear day, be seen, and with a glass the small craft passing Burnham-on-Sea may be clearly discerned. Beyond are the Welsh Hills. To the southward are the Polden Hills, with the monument to Admiral Sir Samuel Hood; and in the direction of Bridgwater the Quantocks, stretching to the Western Coasts, where lie Minehead, Porlock, etc., and to the Wellington Monument and Exmoor. For miles in every direction the view extends, and is one that is likely to fix itself upon the memory.

Until about 1825 a fair was held at the foot of the hill called Tor Fair. The charter for holding this fair was granted by Henry I, 1127, to the abbot and monks "To hold a fair at the Monastery of St. Michael's on the Tor, in the Island of Glastonbury." It was to last six days, five before the feast of St. Michael, and on the feast day itself. A piece of land in the place where it was held is still known as Fair Field, and many other memorials of it still exist, such as the names of the place where the tolls were taken, the spring where the horses were packed and watered, and others. This fair is still held in another part of the town.

### **WEARY-ALL HILL,**

is a hill on the road to Bridgwater, stretching from Glastonbury to Northover. It is not so lofty as the Tor, but presents a fine prospect from the summit, from which can be seen a slight rising ground, which with the district around was formerly called the Island of Beckery. Here was placed a monastic building, the walls of a church and what is supposed to have been a priest's house have been unearthed. The outer walls of the church are not supposed to be earlier than the 14th century, but others built within these and certain materials used in the outer walls denote an earlier date. Several skeletons also were found within the building, and as no trace of coffins was found it appears probable the bodies were here laid upon and in what was considered peculiarly sacred earth.



## THE TRIBUNAL AND THE MUSEUM.

This building is believed to have been the Court House of Glaston Twelve Hides, where all legal cases were heard. It was built by Abbot Beere, the last Abbot but one. Over the entrance are two panels containing the arms of Henry VII and the Glastonbury Rose. Nothing of interest remains in the interior except some carved oak panelling in the upper storey and two ceilings. The carved fireplaces and doors have been removed. Tradition says there are large dungeons below the ground floor, but these have never been explored. This building is now in the hands of the Office of Works.

In a town such as Glastonbury, whose history runs back to so ancient a date, and with its important buildings and ruins, it may be easily conceived that its inhabitants would possess many objects of interest, which, if they could be brought together, would go far towards furnishing a museum. The idea of establishing such an institution had been mooted some years earlier, but in 1885 it was determined to try and bring it to a successful issue. A public meeting was called, and an Antiquarian Society was formed, the Corporation entered into the project with spirit, and gave the lower part of the Town Hall—the part beneath the Council Chamber—for the Society's Museum, and in 1963/4 these historical exhibits were transferred to the Tribunal.

But what has raised the museum above the majority of local institutions of the same kind, and has almost entirely filled the cases, is the finding in 1892 of certain mounds in a field in Godney Marsh by the late Dr. Arthur Bulleid, L.R.C.P., F.S.A., which mounds, upon excavations being made by him, were found to be the site of

## A PREHISTORIC VILLAGE,

each mound marking the position of a hut. There were from sixty to seventy of these mounds, and on cuttings being made through and beneath them it was found they were all of the same character. It appears that oak planks were placed upon brushwood, thus forming a platform that was common to several of the huts. On this oaken platform clay was placed to raise the floor above the marsh; and in or near the centre the hearth-stone is always found. The walls of the dwellings were formed by uprights, which penetrated throughout the layers of clay, and were



Glastonbury Tor.



morticed into planks the beneath. These uprights were close together, wattles were intertwined between them, and the walls completed by being plastered on the outside with clay, or daub. Specimens of this have been found with the impression of the wattles on one side, and that of the thumb pressing in on to the wattles on the other. The platform was kept in position by being pinned by means of poles penetrating the peat below to a considerable depth, which pins were bent at their heads to prevent removal. A considerable portion of the borders of the village has been unearthed, and was found to have formed a stockade of wood-hurdle work as a protection, it is supposed, of the whole community. A very large number of sling stones have been found, and no doubt the inhabitants were subjected to attacks from outside. Roman historians are responsible for the opinion that our early progenitors were little more than half savage, dressing, if they dressed at all, in skins of beasts killed in chase, or much of the body left bare and painted with woad, that plant growing in the neighbourhood, but it is clear from the numerous "finds" that have been made that the inhabitants were industrious and not altogether uncivilised. Without doubt they cultivated the ground a good deal, and several varieties of seed have been found, as well as the querns used for grinding corn. It is evident they wove, as the bone shuttles and combs they used, and weights for keeping the threads in their proper places, have been found, hence it is pretty certain they wore other clothing besides skins. They made pottery, both by wheel and by hand, some of a very ornamental character. They also worked in metal, as vessels are found used as crucibles in which the bronze has been melted, having some of the metal attached. Numerous articles of bronze have been found. They were experienced carpenters, as is shown by the work that has been unearthed, as well as the tools that have been dug up. They also carved wood, some pieces elaborately. Bone needles beautifully made, with points and eyes complete, and slender and delicate fibulae, the exact pattern of our safety pin, and no doubt used by the females to pin up some slight articles of dress—or as brooches—have been brought to light. Very many articles of great interest made of horn or bronze have been found.

At a short distance from the village a boat was also found, 17 feet in length, formed from the trunk of a tree, hollowed out



by fire it is supposed. A portion of another boat was also found near the border of the village. The skulls of two men have been discovered, who appear to have met with rough usage, the bone of one having been cut by a sword or battle axe; also the skeletons of two children. But although so many things that throw light upon the former dwellers in this locality have been found, they do not appear to have had any direct dealings with the Romans. There are no coins found, nor the slightest particle of Samian ware. It is therefore presumed that the date of the village is prior to the Roman settlement in England, or some 300 years B.C.

The site of the excavations was formerly the property of the late E. Bath, Esq., who very generously made a present of it, about five acres, to the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society.

The village was a never failing source of interest, and the excavations carried on at the site have furnished a mass of relics and information, throwing a great deal of light upon one of the most remote and little known periods of the history of the country. The excavations were undertaken in the spring of each year from 1892 until the year 1907, when the whole of the seventy mounds marking the sites of the dwellings had been examined, and the whole outline of the village defined. At first the work was carried on by the late Dr. Bulleid alone, but in later years he had the assistance of Mr. H. St. George Gray, curator of Taunton Museum, and secretary of the Somerset Archaeological Society. These two gentlemen have prepared and published an exhaustive monograph on the subject of the village and dealing with the character of its inhabitants, their mode of life, industries, arts, etc.

Important additional relics were found during later excavations. Allusion must first be made to a beautiful and well preserved bronze bowl, four and a half inches in diameter. It is made of two pieces rivetted together; the under surface is semi-circular, and a hole in it had evidently been made good by rivetting on a small piece. Similar bowls have been found in Asia; they are calculated to be three thousand years old, and to have been used for drinking wine at religious festivals. A number of iron implements were found, including a dagger (9 inches long), an iron brace, bill-hooks (very like those in use at the present day), a saw, and adzes (which might have been used for cutting wood). One of the most interesting discoveries, however, was that of a

number of iron bars, which have been identified by experts as similar to those found in early British camps in the country. The bars are of specific weights, and are known as "currency bars," being used during the late Celtic period in place of coinage for the purposes of trade. Much more could be written about this most interesting village and its inhabitants did not lack of space forbid; but the majority of the relics are on view at the Glastonbury Museum, which is open to visitors daily, and on no account should an inspection of them be missed.

The subject must not be left without a few words concerning the more recent discovery—that of the

### **LAKE VILLAGE AT MEARE,**

the ancient village which lies about three miles to the north-west of Glastonbury. Not content with his work at the Glastonbury village, Dr. Bulleid cast about in the locality for evidences of similar occupation, and in 1895 this search was rewarded by finding these at Meare. There in two fields which lie to the right of Meareway lane—a road which connects Meare and Westhay and is on the direct route to Wedmore—he found a number of mounds of a character similar to those which had attracted his attention and led to the discovery of the Glastonbury Lake Village. The find was kept a secret until the Glastonbury work had been completed, and excavations were not commenced until the spring of 1908. The trial workings proved that Dr. Bulleid was correct in his surmise, for the first mound uncovered displayed a remarkably fine specimen of fire-hearth—one of the most prominent characteristics of these lake villages. Stone seats were also found about the hearth, and other relics discovered included combs of stag-antler, a bronze ring, spindle-whorls, loom-weights, a whet-stone, sling-pellets, and a great deal of pottery. The village undoubtedly belongs to the late Celtic period, the date being about 300 B.C. down to the Roman occupation.

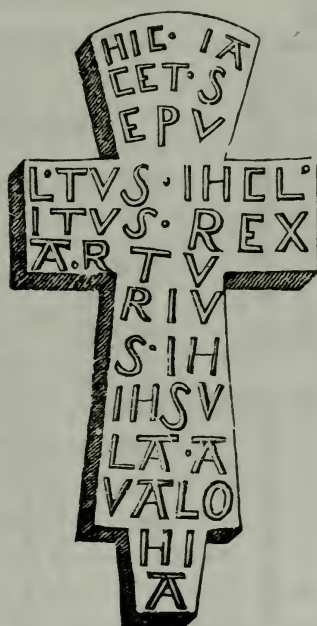
From the abundance of relics turned up, Dr. Bulleid believed that the village would prove to be as important from an antiquarian point of view as the Glastonbury Lake Village, and this proved correct. Mr. Gray has since been carrying on the excavations. The relics are at Taunton.

### **THE MANOR HOUSE MEARE,**

which probably existed at the time of Abbot Michael of Ambresbury, for we are told that he, after serving the Abbey for eighteen years, retired to Meare Manor to rest in 1252, although he retained for his use a chamber and offices in the Monastery. But the architectural features denote the present building to be of a later date, perhaps the middle of the 14th century. Alterations were made by Abbot Beere. Disputes often occurred between the Abbots and Bishops of Bath and Wells about the right of fishing in the Mere, or pool—whence the name—and also as to the right of taking fuel, thatch and other materials from the moor.

### **THE FISH HOUSE, MEARE.**

This is thought to have been a house for one of the officials of the Abbey, and as there are signs of there having been large lakes used for fish close by it was probably the residence of the person in charge of that department. It was built in the time of Adam de Sodbury, 1322 to 1335. The Mere was stated in 1517 to have been a mile in length and three-quarters of a mile in breadth; while in 1539 it was said to be five miles in circuit and a mile and half across. The disparity of size is likely to have arisen from measurements being taken at one time in a wet and in another at a dry season of the year.



### THE KING ARTHUR CROSS

The leaden plate in the form of a Cross found in King Arthur's grave at Glastonbury Abbey in the reign of King Henry II.

The inscription reads: Hic jacet sepultus inclytus Rex Arthurus in Insula Avalonia ("Here lies interred in the Isle of Avalon the renowned King Arthur.")



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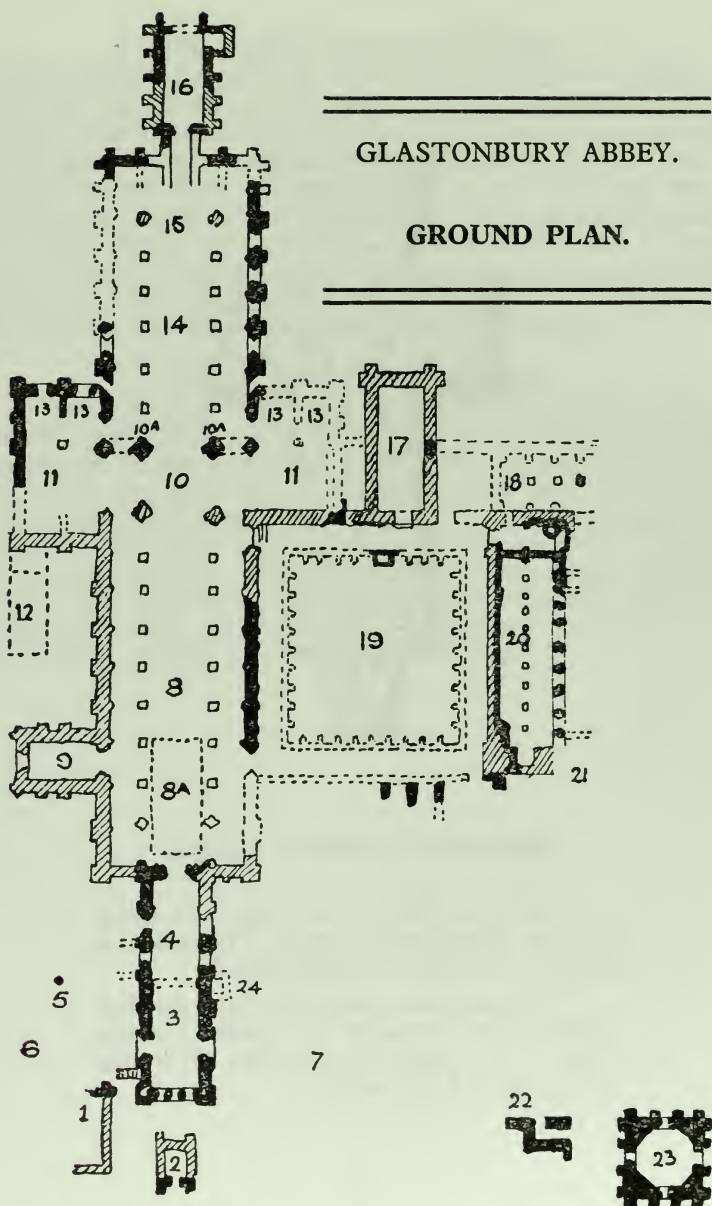
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GLASTONBURY ABBEY.

GROUND PLAN.

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## KEY TO GROUND PLAN

- 1 Small Rectangular Building (use unknown)
- 2 Foundation of St. Dunstan's Chapel
- 3 The Lady or St. Mary's Chapel with the  
Crypt of St. Joseph's Chapel below
- 4 The Galilee
- 5 Site of Column set up to indicate Eastern  
Limit of the Original Church of Wattle.
- 6 Lay Cemetery
- 7 Monk's Cemetery
- 8 The Nave of the Great Church of St. Peter  
and St. Paul
- 8a Foundation of Saxon Church (found 1928-29)
- 9 North Porch of Nave
- 10 Site of Tower of Great Church
- 10a Eastern Piers of Tower
- 11 North and South Transepts
- 12 Probable site of the Loretto Chapel
- 13 Chapels in the Two Transepts
- 14 Choir and Tomb of King Arthur
- 15 High Altar
- 16 Chapel of King Edgar
- 17 The Chapter House
- 18 Dormitory Undercroft
- 19 Cloisters and Cloister Garth
- 20 Refectory Undercroft or Cellar
- 21 Probable site of Monk's Kitchen
- 22 Part of The Abbot's Great Hall
- 23 The Abbot's Kitchen
- 24 The Holy Well

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